

2013

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Casey, M. E. (2013) 'The Working Class on Holiday: British Comedy in Benidorm and Classed Tourism', Journal of Tourism Consumption and Practice, 5(1), p.1-17

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/11709>

Journal of Tourism Consumption and Practice

University of Plymouth

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The Working Class on Holiday: British Comedy in Benidorm and Classed Tourism

Mark. E. Casey

Abstract

In drawing from the popular TV comedy *Benidorm* this paper seeks to engage with research and discourses held around working class tourism. The paper will at first discuss *Benidorm*, focusing upon the characters within the show and asking how is social class presented and performed? And ask who or what are we really laughing at? The paper then moves to examine the background to the birth of the package holiday and the development of the mass tourism resort in Spain. It then draws on writing and research focused around social class and tourism, in particular the work of Andrews (2009, 2011b) and O'Reilly (2000). MacCannell's (1999) focus on 'authenticity' in the tourist experience and Cohen's (1979, 1988) modes of 'doing tourism' are then discussed. Throughout the paper *Benidorm* and its diverse characters are referred to in relation to the many theoretical ideas drawn on within the paper. In so doing the paper discusses how both working and middle class tourists are positioned in the show and how they are theorised within wider discourses held around tourism. This article suggests that the continued success of the show, and more importantly the resort of Benidorm itself reflect a worth for a much wider engagement with working class tourism and its embodied experiences.

Keywords: Benidorm, Tourism, Social Class, Spain, Television

Benidorm

The comedy '*Benidorm*' first aired on British television in 2007 following in the footsteps of other fictitious British television shows and films set in and around the Spanish Costas such as *Carry on Abroad* (1972), *Duty Free* (1984-86) and *Eldorado* (1992-93). The television show, created by Derren Litten, quickly secured high ratings being aired at prime time on Friday evenings on ITV1 and is now entering into its sixth series. The central characters of the show are 'The Garveys' headed by the permanently over-tanned grandmother 'Madge'. The Garveys can be understood as fitting the demographic around which the UK Government is in moral panic - a white working class or lower working class Northern British family. The Garveys, whose 15 year old daughter has a baby to an unknown father, live on state benefits and have little intention of ever finding employment (see Murray, 1994; Jones, 2011, Sparrow, 2011). In the first series the family fund their holiday to Benidorm from benefit fraud to escape the stresses of poverty back home¹. In comparison to The Garveys are 'Martin and Kate', the reserved middle class couple who travel to Spain to seek the 'authentic Spain' in the hills outside of Benidorm. When this plan goes wrong, they accidentally arrive in Benidorm, and worse at the *Solanas Hotel*². Their snobbery and horror at ending up

¹ As the show has developed, The Garveys have moved from funding their holidays through benefit fraud, to having the new husband of Madge pay for their trips

² The *Solanas Hotel* is the fictional name of the real hotel in Benidorm (Hotel Sol Pelicanos-Ocas), where the show is filmed. This hotel attracts many fans of the show staying there on their holidays.

in the resort earns them the status of the 'uninvited other' by the shows other characters and viewers alike.

The character 'Geoff Maltby', played by the comedian Johnny Vegas, is also known as 'the Oracle' (referring to his self proclaimed general knowledge skills). The Oracle is presented as a regular in Benidorm, always taking his holidays with his mum, 'Noreen', who he still continues to live with despite being in his late 30s. The working class gay couple, 'Gavin and Troy' continue the long history of British camp comedy through their bitchy remarks directed towards the heterosexual tourists (see Avila-Saavedra, 2009). Unlike earlier portrayals of gay men as rich, urban and hyper sexual (Casey, 2007), they are refreshingly real in their limited finances and imperfect bodies. Their total acceptance by the other (mainly) heterosexual tourists belies the real diversity that Benidorm embraces. Positioned as the 'opposites' of the homonormalised Gavin and Troy (Brown, 2009), are 'Donald and Jacqueline'. Donald and Jacqueline are in their mid-50s, a white working class northern couple who are presented as the 'sexual deviants' through their hyper sexual needs and lust for multiple sexual partners. Other tourist characters come in and out of focus across each episode and each series, but ever present is the holiday rep, a Liverpudlian named 'Janey', working class, middle aged, rude and intolerant of the endless demands of her low spending but high demanding tourists. Finally there is 'Mateo', the handsome, bisexual Spanish waiter – serving drinks with a wink and fulfilling the sexual needs of the British tourist, in short living up to the stereo-type of a Spanish waiter as perceived in British popular culture (Apter, 1982; Jaworski et al, 2003a; Hughes and Bellis, 2006).

The focus of much of the show is the endless fights, disagreements, drinking, sexual activity and scheming by the residents of the fictitious 'Solanas Hotel'. In particular matriarchal Madge is ever present, dishing out racist comments around her mixed race grandson, the 'sleazy' Spanish waiters, the unwelcomed 'foreign' food or the unpalatable sexual appetites of Donald and Jacqueline. Few are spared her wicked tongue, which breaks almost every politically correct use of language and stereotyping. Her daughter 'Janice Garvey' and son-in-law 'Mick Garvey', although sometimes engaging with Madge's comments, spend much of their time trying to silence her offensive views. Her take on the world is reminiscent to the racist, homophobic and sexist British comedy of the 1970s and 1980s (Malik, 2002). Unlike the 1970s and 1980s where television audiences in the UK could and would laugh along with xenophobic, racist, sexist and homophobic comedians, the audience of *Benidorm* laughs at Madge and others like her. Madge is positioned as the other to be legitimately made fun of. Her lack of engagement with new codes of behaviour in British and Spanish society, maps her as belonging to a diminishing minority, marked through intolerance and ignorance (Nayak, 2006). However, the interactions of the multiple characters present allows

stereotypes of the 'British abroad' to be played out (Andrews, 2011a), whilst acknowledging the rich diversity in tourist bodies present, their wants and desires when in the Spanish Costas. For The Garveys and the other characters, Benidorm offers a perfect setting for a life that is not too 'foreign', where English food, language, media and entertainment can be easily accessed, with the added ingredient of Spanish sunshine.

This paper through its focus on *Benidorm* and working class tourism will first outline the background to the birth of the package holiday and the development of mass tourism resorts such as Benidorm. It will then (move to) draw on writing and research focused around social class and tourism, in particular the work of Andrews (2009, 2011b) and O'Reilly (2000). The paper will then draw from MacCannell's (1999) focus on 'authenticity' in the tourist experience and Cohen's (1979, 1988) modes of 'doing tourism'. Throughout the paper *Benidorm* and its diverse characters are referred to in relation to the many theoretical ideas drawn on within the paper. In so doing the paper discusses how both working and middle class tourists are positioned in the show and how they are theorised within wider discourses held around tourism.

Here comes the Spanish Sun

When the first 32 customers of Vladimir Raitz arrived by air to Corsica in 1950, the beginning of the package holiday was signalled and his position as its founder was secured (Bray, 2001, 2010). Although inclusive tours were not anything new - Thomas Cook had been selling these since the 1880s - it was their combination with air travel that was revolutionary (Lyth, 2009: 11-13). In 1954 Raitz turned his attention to Spain which in time proved to be his 'most fertile ground for the package holiday revolution' (Bray, 2001: 21). Having changed little for centuries the coasts of Spain in the early 1950s were sites of impoverished fishing villages, with farming land near the coasts often worthless (Bray, 2001; Tremlett, 2006). Turner and Ash (1975) estimated that in 1951 there were as few as 1.2 million overseas visitors to Spain exploring a relatively 'undeveloped' country, one that was coming to terms with its brutal civil war and the emergent Franco regime. In this same year the then fishing village of Benidorm attracted few visitors, having four or five small hotels that mainly attracted the Spanish visitor (Tremlett, 2006: 101). In a few short years this would change dramatically. The very low cost of living and the staunch support for tourism from the Franco regime were key in the rapid boom of tourism in Spain (see Tremlett, 2006; Lyth, 2009; Buswell, 2011). As Valanzuela (1988) has observed, the Spanish aimed for mass, low cost tourism – arriving by air, as epitomised by the fictional characters staying at the *Solanas Hotel*. Consequently in doing this the Spanish authorities fervently set about earmarking coastal villages for development to cater for the new tourists, with tourist numbers increasing to 2.5 million by 1955 (Valanzuela, 1988: 40)

The arrival of the jet engine and the increasing size of aeroplanes had an important role in opening Spain to British tourists. For Lyth (2009) the introduction of jet travel allowed companies to offer speed and range, using planes for up to three return flights a day to Spain. By the mid/late 1950s engines were twice as fast as those from the late 1940s and leg room could be reduced (shorter journey times meant discomfort could be endured). Such 'speed tourism' meant that tourists did not need any acclimatisation between their home in the UK and the beaches of Spain (2009: 19-20). In *Benidorm* 'speed tourism' is explored in the immediate use of the swimming pool, sun loungers or all inclusive alcohol by the characters upon their arrival at the hotel – gratification is instant. As foreign travel was growing, holiday companies searched for Spanish destinations that could be developed quickly to meet the needs of British tourists. For example in 1957 the Costa Azul area of Spain was earmarked for development. Showing the growing power and economic worth of the British tourism industry in Spain the area was re-named as the 'Costa Blanca' to appeal more to the British tourist. Similar findings have been found by Buswell (2011) in Mallorca. As the island embraced the package holiday in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the name of the island was increasingly spelt as 'Majorca' to allow British tourists ease in pronouncing the islands name and to increase the islands appeal.

During the 1950s the Mayor of Benidorm 'Pedro Zaragoza' was to become the 'father of modern tourism' in the region through his drive to develop Benidorm into a major tourist destination, with the personal support of Franco 'el Generalísimo' himself (Tremlett, 2006: 101-2). For Tremlett the ideas of Pedro Zaragoza can be understood as being central in the creation of the Benidorm that is known today. He gave support for easy planning permission for hotels that was based on the number of cubic metres of land they covered. Consequently builders and hoteliers understood that the higher they built the more hotel beds they could offer. In so doing they created a high rise resort that for Tremlett is 'crowded a hundred metres up, but by standards of the rest of the Spanish Costas it is light and airy on the ground' (2006: 107). In the opening credits of *Benidorm* the resorts crowded skyline presents an image of an unsophisticated high rise city. This high rise city appears to have less in common with New York and possibly more with some of the failed post-war high rise social housing projects that are to be found in many northern European cities. As O'Reilly (2000) observes, mass tourist resorts are portrayed by the media as representing 'pollution, decay, overcrowding, high-rise blocks' (:19). Today the tallest building in Spain, the Gran Hotel Bali, at 51 floors stands proudly in Benidorm.

In analysis of changes in tourism and migration in Spain the resort of Torremolinos is recounted in the 1950s as '...a small village, not many people and rather bohemian crowd...

There were a few writers and artists and well known upper crust names were living out here quietly' (King et al, 2000: 84). As Turner and Ash (1975: 98-99) comment, Torremolinos is an example of rapid change in Spain's market status, where middle class tourists began to seek out alternative destinations from the growing masses on the coast. Even by the early 1970s Spain's coasts had become primarily dependent on the tastes of Northern Europe's working class, with this tourist on average spending very little by world standards. As Ritchie (1993) noted, Torremolinos continues in its popularity, but as with contemporary Benidorm, it is popularity among working class, low income tourists, who seek out 'others like them'. For Tremlett (2006) the Benidorm of the early 21st century has echoes of the British working class resort of Blackpool (see Webb, 2005). His reflections echo the findings of Andrews (2010, 2011b) and her work on the working class resort of Magaluf on Mallorca. Magaluf has been derided by the British press and middle class travellers alike, earning the monicker 'Megaruff'. Similar slights have been made against Benidorm with it becoming 'a huge joke', where the British press go to sneer at the working class at play (Tremlett, 2006: 109).

From August 1st – 3rd 2011 the ITV1 breakfast show '*Day Break*' ran three days of programming from Benidorm to celebrate the filming of the fifth series of the show. In the background of the live camera shots were British tourists, their bodies and appearance making them appear like extras from the show. As these real tourists danced and chanted '*England, England*' in the background of a live camera shot, one of the show's hosts back in London asked, '*I wonder what the Spanish really think of us?*' Her remark was interesting as it was clear she was not positioning herself as belonging to the collective 'us', but asking what do the Spanish think of *them*, the white working class tourist and the embodied performances of their 'unsophisticated' classed identity. Through her comment and surprised expression, she positioned herself against the mass tourist in Benidorm. Her worldly media presenting job and her expensive and perfectly presented dress and body, allowing her to make claims to the right sort of cultural capitals and create a distinction against those who cannot.

Tourism and Social Class

Tourism involves the movement of people through and the placing of them within various sorts of spaces and places. The perceived social class of tourist sites and those present within them has consequences for those who may make claims to belong, and those who do not belong and are 'out of place and time'. Engaging with social class it is possible to theorise how tourism developed in different sites and in different ways, where specific places become associated with the working class (Turner and Ash, 1975; Urry, 1990), whilst others become associated with middle class (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; Casey, 2009). As Andrews (2011b) has shown, tourists and those working within the tourism industry will themselves

associate specific resorts as 'belonging' to a certain class of tourist. For example in *Benidorm* Martin and Kate position themselves and are positioned by the other characters as not belonging. In the third series, as Martin's mother arrives to 'rescue' him from Benidorm, Janice Garvey asks Mick, '*Who is she? She doesn't belong here, she is far too posh*'. Eventually Janice challenges Martin's mother for looking out of place at the *Solanas Hotel* due to her expensive looking clothes and 'posh' demure. Later in the same episode Madge verbally abuses Martin's wife Kate for being '*that stuck up cow*', in response Kate strongly rebukes her and her '*council chariot*',³ whilst affirming her 'disgust' for the '*dump*' that is the *Solanas Hotel*.

Through the consumption of specific tourist sites and lifestyle experiences, new social capitals can be gathered, with their value dependent on whom else is present and how that experience is being shared. Individuals need an ability to 'know' and 'appreciate' what and how to consume so they can attain the *right* cultural capital (see Mowforth and Munt, 1998). The struggles between the different classes for greater value to be given to their cultural meanings and experiences have been positioned as key to many of the cultural and structural features of modern tourism (Munt, 1994; Adams and Raisborough, 2008). This struggle creates a growing spatial distinction between the middle class traveller and the working class tourist, where the middle class increasingly seek out 'unspoilt' or long-haul destinations away from the mass package holiday tourist (Curtin, 2010). As the working class gain access to mobilities once reserved for the old middle classes, the mass tourist has to be 'pushed away' and the new middle class move on to seek 'untouched' destinations. Physical distance is established to create a distinction from those who have become 'dangerously close' in spatial and cultural terms (Lawler, 2005; Adams and Raisborough, 2008). As Mantecon and Huete (2008) found, middle class British tourists still head to Spain, but they seek out a Spain away from the working class masses.

For McCabe (2005) people draw upon the describable features of places and tourist sites in constructing their identities, making claims to belong in certain places by virtue of the type of behaviour or identities other people exhibit in them and/or the physical characteristics of the places visited (O'Reilly, 2000; Ryan, 2002). The 'new middle classes' are key for initiating, transmitting and translating what consumption patterns and cultural processes have worth and which do not. Through advocating the development of new forms of tourism and travel,

³ The character of Madge, although not disabled, drives around Benidorm in a mobility scooter in every series. Her reasons for undertaking this is that she '*shouldn't have to walk*' whilst on holiday. The association of mobility scooters with council housing by Kate reflects a wider belief that 'perfect bodies' represent the well being associated with exclusive holidays, with disabled tourism seen as its inferior 'other' (Shaw and Coles, 2004). The imperfect or impoverished body has been positioned as representing less desirable forms of holiday undertaking (see Waller and Lea, 1998; Casey, 2010b).

the new middle class tourist is able to stand apart from both the working class tourist and the old middle class who engage in mass tourism (see Mowforth and Munt, 1998). The characters of Martin and Kate seek out holiday experiences that they understand to have a value that positions them apart from the other characters in the *Solanas Hotel*. In the first series they visit the 'Old Town' in Benidorm in search for its authentic cuisine, culture and architecture. Interestingly in the first three series Gavin and Troy, Donald and Jacqueline and The Oracle leave the confines of the hotel and head into the old town district too. However their use of the old town is presented as an engagement with the large gay scene that exists in its many side-streets and the commercial entertainment attached. Later in series four, Gavin desires to experience the 'real' Benidorm, so his holidaying friend ('Kenneth') suggests the 'Benidorm Museum of Culture'. Upon arrival they learn it has been closed for a number of years:

Gavin: (angrily) 'Well I would say I was surprised but of course that would be a filthy lie'.

Kenneth: 'I don't understand it, it is in the guide book'

Gavin: '(grabbing Kenneth's guide book) 'Benidorm on a Budget, 1999?'

Gavin's lack of surprise at the closure of a museum dedicated to Benidorm's 'culture' suggests that Benidorm has no culture worthy of a museum. At this point Kenneth suggests a nearby beach:

Kenneth: 'There is a little cove beach down the road'

Gavin: (very angrily) 'Well I hope they haven't moved it since 1999!'

On arrival Gavin is overjoyed at finding a non-developed 'authentic' Spanish cove without another holiday maker in sight. Unbeknown to Gavin, Kenneth had known all along that the museum had closed down. His interests lie in the gradual arrival of increasing numbers of gay male nude sunbathers, and the sexual exploits they may promise. Other than Gavin, the working class characters of *Benidorm* are not presented as seeking out Spanish culture, merely the delights of Benidorm's night-time economy or potential sexual exploits as presented on its beaches.

For the new middle classes, competition for cultural capital in the social field of travel involves pursuing authenticity and exclusivity, a crucial axis of differentiation and distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). In the planning and experiencing of their holidays, Curtin (2010) found that his middle class tourists desired to be away from mass tourism, enabling them to access 'authentic' experiences that mass tourism destroys. The value of past holidays and experiences consumed was utilised in Curtin's research sample in communicating themselves as knowledgeable to other group members, who were assumed to possess

similar (middle class) norms, values and knowledge. Their narratives frame(d) their class backgrounds, aspirations and cultural capitals – distancing themselves against the mass working class tourist and the 'inauthentic' mass tourism they represent. In his research upon middle class residents and tourists within the British countryside, Mordue (2009) found that the middle class made claims to knowledge around how to navigate the countryside and how to perform the 'correct' tourist identity. Such knowledge was used to make claims to 'rightfully' judge working class tourists who did not perform the 'correct' tourist identity as suggested by Mordue's middle classes.

In distancing her/himself from mass tourism, the middle class tourist is able to make claims to the 'good tourist' identity, drawing upon her/his cultural capital to showcase that s/he is culturally aware and sensitive, confident to judge what behaviour is appropriate (and what isn't). In the opening episode of the second series, Martin and Kate have booked themselves into an independent Spanish hotel, in the small village of Altea away from Benidorm. Standing at the luggage carousel at Alicante airport Martin is wearing a linen suit, whilst Kate has her pashmina casually around her neck. As they discuss the location of their holiday with another tourist (he is wearing cropped sports trousers and a football shirt), he is horrified that they are heading somewhere other than Benidorm. He asks, '*Do you know you won't get an English breakfast there?*' and points out that '*there is hardly any British up there, not like in Benidorm*'. Both Kate and Martin are sufficiently confident in their middle class identity and the knowledge they possess to communicate that to their relief they 'know' this. As they arrive in the Spanish village it is presented as the 'other' to Benidorm, tranquil, unspoilt, clean; the 'authentic Spain'⁴. Even their clothing indicates that they belong there. Their relationship with Benidorm can be theorised as 'anti-tourist', based on strategies where social capital can be acquired and maintained, remaining as a marker of distinction from the mass working class tourist (Gustafson, 2002: 900).

For Lawler (2005) those most concerned with social differentiation and the acquisitions of the 'right' social capitals are the middle classes. Through an engagement in 'new tourisms' (such as eco tourism, volunteering; non-tourist sites etc), members of the 'new middle class' are able to mark their distinction against those who undertake older less insightful forms of tourist consumption. Travel and the experiences gathered serve as an axis of inter-group differentiation. In communicating one's acquired cultural capital(s) those who have been successful in travel and tourism experiences are able to distance themselves from those who have failed through undertaking inauthentic mass tourism or worse, no holidays at all

⁴ Martin and Kate's stay is short lived. To their horror, they are 'double booked' at the hotel and are sent packing to the sister hotel – the *Solanas Hotel* in Benidorm.

(see Adams and Raisborough, 2008: 1177).⁵ This successful middle class traveller is positioned as *the* desirable tourist by tourist authorities and local councils alike as Mantecon and Huete (2008: 203) found; 'When we talk about quality we mean acceptable level of... a level of tourists who have a certain spending power' (Bloc-Els Verds, Spanish town councillor).

Through her research focused upon tourism in the Mallorcan resorts of Magaluf and Palma Nova, the insights offered by Andrews (2005, 2006, 2010, 2011a/b) have contributed significantly to understandings around working class mass tourism. Her work engages binaries held around meanings of 'undesirable' tourists and a 'better class' of tourist as held by and amongst working class tourists themselves. One of Andrews (2011b: 3-4) immediate observations concerning both resorts is that they are predominantly 'British' - white, heterosexual and working class, with neither making much reference to Spanish or Mallorcan culture. The works of O'Reilly (2000), King et al (2000) and Bowen and Schouten (2008) have found similar characteristics of resorts and retirement destinations in other areas of Spain. In their research resorts popular with British tourists and ex-pats attracted a mainly white, heterosexual, working class tourist and resident, attracted by both the climate and the familiarity of the many British amenities on offer.

Andrew's description of Magaluf provides imagery not dissimilar to that of Benidorm, where there is a large presence of British bars, British cafes and restaurants, a proliferation of British football shirts on tourist's bodies, union jack tattoos, British media and an air of self-gratification. She suggests that this identity has earned Magaluf the nickname 'Shagaluf', and I would suggest that in Benidorm this identity has earned the resort the nickname 'Bonkydorm'. Magaluf and Palma Nova are spatially very close to one another, almost merging. However, participants in the work of Andrews understood Palma Nova as offering a 'better class of tourist'; there was perceived to be less noise and anti-social behaviour. The resort of Palma Nova is positioned as attracting more elderly and 'upmarket' working class tourists, along with a handful of middle class tourists who wish to escape the badly behaved younger tourists in Magaluf (MTV, 5.8.2011). In making claims to better social, cultural and economic capitals some of her working class participants position themselves as the 'better other' ⁶ (Andrews, 2010). In *Benidorm*, distinction from other working class tourists is highlighted by the Oracle. On seeing The Garveys arrive in the second series, he comments

⁵ The work of Kontogeorgopoulos (2003) suggests that as the middle class seek out new and further afield destinations, their belief in possessing 'cultural awareness' is often misguided. He argues that the middle class tourist is guilty of creating negative cultural impacts that are often more severe than those found in mature mass tourism resorts such as Benidorm.

⁶ As the work of O'Connell and Williams (2005) has shown, social class is but one factor in tourism consumption. Other identities such as age, gender (Andrews, 2011b) and sexuality (Casey, 2009) all intersect to influence an individual's ability to travel.

to his mum, '*By 'eck, look at that lot, they're rough... this place is going to the dogs*'. In the third series, when The Garveys get into a fight, Janey (the holiday rep) in her attempts to re-take control of the pool area, demands, '*take your episode of Jeremy Kyle elsewhere*' ⁷ (see Adib and Guerrier, 2001). As Andrews shows, ways of 'doing holidays' are not based on a simple working/middle class binary. Working class tourists draw upon past experiences, tastes and knowledges to access the 'better' resort and create a physical distance from other working class tourists.

Seeking the Authentic in Benidorm?

'...Benidorm. If you want hordes of British... sunseekers, scores of 'English' pubs, at least seventy discos and bacon and eggs for breakfast, this is the place to come' (Buckley and Duford, 1994: 1009).

The Benidorm represented above has echoes of the resort as it is portrayed in the TV show, with Huete (2005: 3) arguing, 'Benidorm is a leisure town par excellence'. Much of the action that is presented in the show takes place in two key areas - around the hotel swimming pool during the day and at the hotel's bar and entertainment venue 'Neptune's' on an evening. The concern of The Garveys and other characters present is rarely the search for an 'authentic Spain' (Weller and Lea, 1998; Gustafson, 2002). Their focus is presented to be the sun, all inclusive alcohol and food, along with the nightly (British) entertainment. The characters within the show are given little reason to leave the confines of the *Solanas Hotel*. In the first series The Garveys and Donald and Jacqueline venture out of the hotel to experience the beaches of Benidorm. The trip is short lived after a fake sun lounge salesperson cons The Garveys out of money. The beach is presented as threatening, an over consumed, crowded and uncontrolled space that cannot offer the controlled safety to be found in the hotel.

For Mantecon and Huete (2008) what is interpreted as authentic, depends on what tourists consider to be original elements of a place and those elements tourists consider to be fake or imitated. As they argue, 'authenticity is a property, which real objects may or may not possess, which refers to credibility and originality' (:361). For Sedmak and Mihalic (2008) authenticity cannot be understood as a compliance with an 'original', but the pre-tourism characteristics of a place. For them this can be attractions such as architecture, cuisine, intangible heritage, the natural environment and so on. In developing Waller and Lea's (1998: 111) use of slogans in discussing authenticity such as 'The *real* Italy', 'The *real* Greece' and 'Discover the Mediterranean's Best Kept Secret' [all my emphasis], it is clear that they allude

⁷ Jones (2011:123) describes the 'The Jeremy Kyle Show' as '...a human form of bear-baiting'.

to tourists being able to access the authentic, the real, the unspoilt, the exclusive. I would argue that such advertising slogans are classed, designed to appeal to the new middle class tourist who wishes to stand apart from the mass package holiday hordes. After all it is not possible to suggest that Benidorm is the 'Mediterranean's best kept secret'!

The arrival of this mass tourist for some theorists is positioned as a 'grave loss', with mass tourists seeking out a series of pseudo-events (Turner and Ash, 1975; Smith 1978). These pseudo-events as termed by Boorstin (1964) are inauthentic performances, staged realities and cultures that are commodified so that tourists can consume other cultures in quick, short periods of time. MacCannell (1999) draws from Erving Goffman's dramaturgical model in theorising the 'layers of authenticity' within the tourism experience. As Goffman (1972) theorised, people 'perform' various identities in different spatial settings. MacCannell suggests that there are six levels of authenticity ranging from Goffman's 'front region', for example, a social space such as the reception in a hotel. In the front region the staff of a hotel or bar will perform 'pseudo-events' for the benefit of the tourist. As Jaworski et al (2003a/b) have theorised, tourists will often have limited contact with locals. Most contact occurs when locals take on the roles of 'helpers, servants, experts or part of the local scenery' (135). In their jobs serving tourists they can create the illusion of closeness and friendship.⁸ For example the barman Mateo is portrayed as insincere and fake in his relationships with the tourists at the *Solanas Hotel*. He is only polite, helpful or kind when he wants something that usually involves seeking money or a sexual relationship with one of the tourists. His sexual desires represent other imagery of the hyper sexual Mediterranean bar man, similar to the bar owner 'Costas' in the 1989 British film 'Shirley Valentine' (see Hughes and Bellis, 2006; Casey, 2010a).

At the other end of Goffman's dramaturgical model is the 'back region', a region which for MacCannell tourists will never truly get to explore or become part of. This region for MacCannell is the 'authentic', a setting in which the 'real culture' is present. For Gustafson (2002: 901), drawing on Cohen (1988), it is possible to critique the ideas of MacCannell. Gustafson asks, in equating the authentic with the 'primitive' or the 'pristine', those things that have not yet been touched by modernity, are all tourists seeking out these sites and if they do, can claims to authenticity remain? For Cohen (1988) a key problem of MacCannell's ideas is that he positions authenticity as an objective quality that all tourists seek out to 'give meaning' to their travels. As the characters in *Benidorm* present, their quest on holiday may have less to do with authenticity and more to do Boorstin's 'pseudo-events' or with Bakhtin's

⁸ The work of Casey (2009, 2010b) has problematised this simple worker/tourist spatial binary. His work has shown that tourists will and do engage in long term friendships and sexual relationships with locals and other tourists alike.

(1984) 'carnavalesque'. *Benidorm* represents that an 'atmosphere of freedom' reigns and 'the official ordering of time is suspended and people become organised in their own way' (Bakhtin, 1984 cited in Webb, 2005: 122).

In a further analysis of authenticity it is worthwhile drawing upon Cohen's (1988) development of 'tourist modes'. Cohen outlines a number of 'modes' in referring to how tourists 'do tourism'. In theorising *Benidorm*, both his 'recreational mode' and the 'diversionary mode' are useful in understanding the tourist motivations and experiences of the characters. Cohen's recreational mode theorises tourism as just one form of entertainment open to the masses in late modernity. It is akin to going to the theatre, cinema, or even watching television. The recreational tourist for Cohen enjoys their trip because it restores their physical and mental powers, giving them a greater sense of well-being, as for Gavin and Troy or Donald and Jacqueline, for example. These tourists are willing to accept 'make believe' or the pseudo events as described by Boorstin (1964) and embrace 'commercialisation, the inauthentic, the trivial, the buying of signs rather than reality' (O'Reilly, 2000: 18). Those tourists characterised by the diversionary mode undertake their holidays in an escape from the boredom and routine of their everyday lives. This type of tourist mode does not establish adherence to a meaningful centre, it only makes Weber's (1983) alienation endurable. I would suggest that The Garveys are representative of this form of doing tourism. Their yearly trips to Benidorm allow them to escape from the harsh economic realities of their lives back in Manchester, before returning to an unchanging reality.

Conclusion

By including working class and middle class characters in *Benidorm*, the show invites viewers to ponder how classed identities are performed spatially whilst on holiday. Benidorm represents Martin and Kate as those most concerned with distinction from the mass working class tourists at the *Solanas Hotel*. However, unlike research that has focused upon middle class tourism (e.g. Curtin, 2010), it is the middle class who are represented as being 'out of place and time' in *Benidorm*. Their cultural and social capital has little worth and meaning away from the middle class retreats in the Spanish hills and countryside. It is The Garveys and other characters present who belong at the *Solanas Hotel*. Through the annual influx of millions of working class British tourists and the embodied performances of their class and ethnicity, Benidorm is presented as a resort where the cultural capital(s) of the British, white, working classes have worth and value. Distinction is created against the other, where Martin and Kate (and their associated middle class values) become 'dangerously close' to spoiling working class holidays and the 'carnavalesque' atmosphere of Benidorm.

As some of the working class characters in *Benidorm* show, along with those in the research of Andrews (2011b), working class tourists draw from understandings concerning a 'better class of tourist' or 'better resorts' in differentiating themselves from other 'badly behaved' working class tourists. The varied working class characters in the show and the multiple identities they possess such as gender, age, sexuality, disability etc, along with references made to the varied lives they have left 'back home' in the UK, reminds us that 'the working class' are not one homogeneous group. The Garveys may represent the current moral panic held around the white working class in the UK (Jones, 2011) and their antics abroad, but they are just one example of how people 'do class' and its complex intersections with other diverse identities (see Taylor et al, 2011). As the characters perform their varied identities, it is their search for leisure and fun that are the common denominators to their stay in Benidorm. Through their recreational and diversionary modes (Cohen, 1988) of 'doing tourism' the characters in the show are presented as not seeking access to an 'authentic Spain' (MacCannell, 1999). The Spanish sunshine, free alcohol, English food, a pool and night time entertainment are presented as the key concerns of the working class characters, echoing findings of Andrews (2010) and O'Reilly, (2001). Such consumption may not be understood as representing an 'authentic Spain' (MacCannell, 1999; Mantecon and Huete, 2008), but as Waller and Lea (1998) have reminded us, measuring what is 'authentic' is fraught with problems.

This article suggests that the continued success of the show, and more importantly the resort of Benidorm itself reflect a worth for a much wider engagement with working class tourism and its embodied experiences. Through an increased attention on working class tourism understandings of 'authenticity' may move beyond those defined and claimed by middle class tourists and academics alike. The continued popularity, economic worth and presence of large scale resorts such as Benidorm, Torremolinos or Magaluf in Spain over 50 years since the advent of the package holiday may suggest that understandings of 'authentic' Spain may have to shift to include these resorts and the many experiences they offer.

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Author details: Dr Mark E. Casey is a Lecturer in Sociology at Newcastle University, UK. He has undertaken research and published on gay male travel in Australia and has an

interest in low cost air travel and its social and cultural impacts. Mark is engaged in research on the island of Mallorca that is examining the impacts of the economic downturn on British 'expats' and their meanings of home.